

# **Making Room in History for the Miraculous part II**

**DAVID SAMUEL**

In the first article on this subject I argued that, from a philosophical point of view, historical evidence for the miraculous is admissible and that exclusion of miraculous events from ordinary history was arbitrary and the result of a one-sided, man-centred definition of history.

## **Scepticism**

The question that must now be asked and discussed in this article is: What would be the nature of the evidence required to establish the historicity of a miracle, such as the resurrection of Christ? But first we must deal with a certain scepticism and confusion which has surrounded the subject of historical facts. R.G. Collingwood claimed that a distinction must be made between contemporary facts which are directly ascertainable and historical facts which are not. 'According to the positivistic theory of knowledge', he argued, 'a fact is something immediately given in the perception. When it is said that science consists first in ascertaining facts and then in discovering laws, the facts, here, are facts directly observed by the scientist . . . In History, the word "fact" bears a very different meaning. The fact that in the second century the legions began to be recruited wholly outside Italy is not immediately given. It is arrived at inferentially by a process of interpreting data according to a complicated system of rules and assumptions.'<sup>1</sup> For Collingwood, then, facts are things which can be perceived directly in the present time by the scientist, but the historian is under the disadvantage of having to infer them, because they have disappeared with the passage of time and are no longer capable of being directly inspected or perceived. He uses this as the justification for giving to the facts of history a different status altogether from those of science, and of course, since they are not available for inspection the historian requires a different technique for establishing them from the scientist.

## **Positivist doctrine**

This understanding of facts derives from logical atomism which was the philosophy prevalent at the time Collingwood was writing. Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein were the principal leaders of that school of thought which taught that language pictured reality.

Each word in order to be meaningful stood in a one to one relation with reality. Wittgenstein took the doctrine of picturing so far as to suggest that the structure of the fact must be mirrored in the structure of the proposition which reflected it. The basic atomic fact, however, was not objects but sense-data, and the theory was that all meaningful statements were capable in principle of being translated into statements about sense-data, and the statements about sense-data mirrored the atomic facts. Thus as Collingwood says, on this theory a fact was part of the furniture of the real world and capable of being directly perceived. If this were the case, of course, it would be true that facts are not capable of being perceived by the historian and his knowledge of them must be inferential and indirect. They would remain forever beyond his reach, and could only be posited from the evidence which pointed to them. Bloch clearly thought in these terms too, for he put the matter thus, 'the historian is by definition absolutely incapable of observing the facts which he examines. No Egyptologist has ever seen Rameses. No expert on the Napoleonic wars has ever heard the sound of cannon at Austerlitz.'<sup>2</sup> Alan Richardson, in his discussion of what are historical facts, took over this conception and enlisted it in support of the view that there is no such thing as uninterpreted facts. The historian has no such privileged access. He cannot view them directly, but always indirectly, through the medium of evidence. Earlier historians believed that they could get at the facts, 'but this is a naively uncritical view of history. Doubtless in the sense of "what happened" the facts are indeed immutable, but in this sense they are just what the historian can never directly know. It is not the reality which the historian takes apart but only the "sources". He never gets at the uninterpreted facts, "what really happened", because the uninterpreted facts-in-themselves constitute a noumenal reality, which lies beyond the focus of our perception.'<sup>3</sup>

Enough has been said to show that a very large platform has now been erected upon this foundation of the logical atomist's conception of fact. But was that understanding sound? Its weakness lay in its dependence upon a particular doctrine of language and its relation to reality—'language pictured reality'. When in the 1930's the whole enterprise to demonstrate this relationship broke down, because it was found impossible to translate statements about material objects into statements that mirrored atomic facts, this understanding of fact, which was part of the metaphysic of logical atomism, became discredited also. This means that theologians who adopted the concept of fact advocated by Collingwood were operating with a notion which was not only out of date, but philosophically discredited. What, then, are we to understand today by a fact?

## **True statements**

The use of the word 'fact' is a way of saying that a statement is always true. 'Brutus killed Caesar' is a fact, that is, 'Brutus killed Caesar' is true. A.J. Ayer was making a proper point when he drew attention to the redundant character of the word 'true' in a statement such as we have cited. To say 'p is true' is, he argued, the equivalent of saying 'p'.<sup>4</sup> He was unable to go beyond this point, because he thought that to deny a describing capacity to a word made it impossible to say anything more about it. But talking is not always reporting or describing, sometimes it is doing. Here that clearly applies. I am not describing anything when I say that a statement is true. I am doing something, viz. guaranteeing it, underlining and confirming it.<sup>5</sup>

To say, then, of a statement that it is a fact is not to talk about a mysterious metaphysical relationship holding between a certain configuration of objects 'out there' and the statement, but simply to say something about the character of the statement, viz. that it is true. 'Facts' as P.H. Strawson said, 'are what true statements state. They are not what statements are about. They are not like things or happenings on the face of the globe, witnessed or heard or seen, broken or overturned, interrupted or prolonged, kicked or destroyed, mended or noisy.'<sup>6</sup> We have made the mistake of hypostatizing facts and giving them some kind of independent existence. Thus Strawson tells us with very good reason, that 'if you prize the statements off the world you prize the facts off too.'

This understanding of fact materially alters our understanding of what the historian is doing when he seeks to establish facts relating to the past. One of the chief differences between this understanding and that of Collingwood and others lies in this, that since facts are not part of the furniture of the world it is meaningless to talk about perceiving them, as if they were tables or chairs and objects of that sort. In view of this, it is quite false to assume that the scientist has immediate access to facts which he can perceive, while the historian is placed at a disadvantage in that he can only infer the facts of history, but never directly perceive them. All the mystique about 'noumenal realities' veiled from the gaze of the historian, 'immutable facts' which he can never directly apprehend, disappears. The historian has as immediate a relation with facts as has the scientist. If facts are true statements then they are no further removed from the historian than they are from the scientist. Some reflection on this point will help to make it clear.

## **Verifying facts**

How, for example, do I ascertain the truth of the contemporary statement that the cat is on the mat? Presumably by looking at the cat on the mat. But what I am perceiving in doing this is not the fact, but the evidence that enables me to assert the fact, i.e. make the true

statement that the cat is on the mat. How then do I verify the historical statement that Lloyd George knew my father? In principle, in precisely the same way, by examining the evidence, i.e. letters from Lloyd George to my father, conversation with friends who knew them both, etc., which enables me to say, it is true, i.e. it is a fact, that Lloyd George knew my father. But in examining the evidence I would not be viewing the fact. In each case I am doing precisely the same thing, examining the evidence for asserting a fact, i.e. for making a true statement. Facts, therefore, are no more inaccessible to the historian, philosophically or metaphysically speaking, than they are to anyone else for the sole reason that facts are not special kinds of objects in the external world but true statements.

It may, however, be objected that sense-experience must hold a special place in the hierarchy of evidence and so by its very nature afford direct as opposed to indirect evidence of events and other phenomena, which puts those who examine contemporary events in a stronger position than the historian, who, because he is dealing with past events, must always find attaching to his evidence a degree of doubt and uncertainty. Again, to decide whether there is any truth in this criticism we must return to our examples. What counts as evidence that the cat is on the mat? Is it enough that I look at it or must I go up to it and stroke it or even induce it to purr? Is it necessary for me to see it only from one side or all sides? And so on.<sup>7</sup> What would count as evidence that Lloyd George knew my father? Would one letter or two? If two why not three, and is it not arbitrary to stop at three, why not a hundred? Would it be enough to question one acquaintance of both men or two? If two, why not . . .? etc. The point is that sense-experience is only one kind of evidence amongst others, but simply because it is sense experience it is no more privileged or certain than any other. It is equally open to scepticism if one wishes to be sceptical. Therefore, facts whether they relate to the past or the present can be established with equal certainty providing the evidence upon which they are based, of whatever kind it may be, is sufficient to a reasonable mind.

This explodes the theory that the historical facts are in some way inaccessible in themselves to the historian, that he must be content with inference, and can only hazard a guess as to what the 'facts-in-themselves' might have been. It is possible to have knowledge of facts relating to the past which is as reliable and certain as knowledge of present facts, providing the evidence is sufficient to satisfy the requirements of a reasonable person. (It is interesting that Bloch acknowledges the truth of this, though he is still under the mistaken impression that facts are things that we directly perceive.)<sup>8</sup>

## **Facticity of Resurrection**

Is, then, the resurrection of Christ, i.e. that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, (taken as the supreme example of the miraculous), a factual or empirical statement capable of being established by evidence?

There are some theologians who have argued that no amount of evidence could establish a miracle such as the resurrection, since any statement about it cannot be classified logically as an empirical or factual statement. Therefore, the whole attempt to establish the resurrection of Our Lord as a "historical fact" is misconceived, for it must rest in the last analysis not upon evidence but upon faith. I.T. Ramsey in his book *Religious Language* contends for such a position. Religious language is empirical language, but qualified in such a way as to make it function differently and become instrumental in evoking faith, which he calls a 'discernment-commitment' situation. Thus to approach religious language without this understanding, but on the assumption that it functions in the same way as straightforward empirical statements do, is to invite confusion of categories. The statement 'the queen has died', he argues, belongs to a different logical category from the statement 'Christ rose from the dead' as the latter is meant to evoke faith and the former is not.<sup>9</sup>

This attempt to lift the resurrection, and miracles in general for that matter, out of the arena of historical debate does not appear to be satisfactory. We must be careful here not to confuse the question of the resurrection as a factual historical statement capable of being substantiated by evidence with the question of faith in the significance of the resurrection, which is another matter. For example, Ramsey accepts that knowledge of the crucifixion is possible without faith in its significance as Christians understand it. 'Everybody', he says, 'who did the equivalent of buying an evening newspaper or listening to the news in something like A.D.33 ought to have believed all these phrases . . . ' i.e. crucified, dead and buried.<sup>10</sup> These things, then, in principle present no problem for their candidature as historical facts in a perfectly straightforward manner; but what about the resurrection? Must that be put in a different category? It would seem from the way in which it is employed in both scripture and the creeds that it does not. 'Crucified, dead and buried, and the third day he rose again.' There is no apparent change of key logically between the first three and the last. It seems to stand on the same ground line or alleged facticity as the others. It should, therefore, be something that is capable in principle of being established as a historical fact as much as the other three. What is required is the sort of evidence that will satisfy a reasonable mind.

It is true that one cannot trust in the resurrection any more than one can trust in the crucifixion as a saving event until as Ramsey puts it 'the

penny drops' and the discernment-commitment of faith is made, but belief in the crucifixion and resurrection as historical facts is prior logically to such commitment, and to reverse this order is to make faith dependent upon itself.

### **Presuppositions as setting for facts**

The difficulty with the question of the resurrection as a historical fact lies in the scepticism with which it is often approached, so that it is sometimes thought that no degree of evidence could establish it as a fact. The conclusion then drawn, but mistakenly, is that it is not, therefore, a factual, i.e. empirical statement, but something which is in the last resort a matter of faith. But we have seen that extreme scepticism can be brought to the commonest matters and the most impeccably empirical statements. 'The cat is on the mat' is perfectly capable of being doubted by the sceptic, and there are simply no criteria that will satisfy him that it is true. Does this make the acceptance of such statements ultimately a matter of faith? There is a sense, of course, in which it is true, but to use faith in this context is really unnecessary and for ordinary purposes we do not. Faith here, if it were used, would stand for the implicit assumptions we all make about the world and phenomena, which give the statement to all but the sceptic its reasonable character and make the evidence significant and sufficient. It is true that once these assumptions are questioned, as they were by the critical philosophy of Hume, then the evidence no longer satisfies. If we transpose this situation to the question of the resurrection we can see how it applies. The matter is, in principle, as factual as any other, and evidence may be given for its having taken place. What, however, is lacking are the implicit assumptions which make that evidence significant. It is not that the resurrection is any less factual or empirical a matter than the crucifixion, death and burial of Christ, but the presuppositions that would make the evidence meaningful are not there in the critical historian. What are these presuppositions?

They are not to be confused with Christian faith, which is a personal commitment to and trust in Christ. They are of a much more general nature; they are the presuppositions of theism. A.M. Ramsey in his book *The Resurrection of Christ* states 'To discard presupposition altogether (when approaching the subject of the Resurrection) would be an impossible adventure; and rather than claim to discard presuppositions the present writer would ask sympathy for two very modest presuppositions. The one is that the Biblical belief in the living God, creator, redeemer, transcendent is true. The other is that the events must be such as account for the Gospel the Apostles preached . . . We would not use these presuppositions for the pressing of historical conclusions; but we would so bear them in mind as to avoid a sort of inhibition if the

converging lines of evidence seem to point to a supernatural event at the climax of the story of Christ.’<sup>11</sup>

The adoption of such presuppositions does not make the question of the resurrection any less a factual or empirical matter that may in principle be verified by the appropriate evidence nor does the notion that evidence must be set within a context of theistic belief make it any less historical evidence. It is interesting that both J.B. Mozley and William Paley, apologists of an earlier period, were careful to insist upon this. Paley warned his readers that ‘we do not assume the attributes of the Deity . . . to prove the reality of miracles. That reality must always be proved by evidence.’<sup>12</sup> Similarly Mozley asserted that the admission of an antecedent faith in God as being necessary for the reception of evidence of miracles does not destroy the miracle’s ground in history. It does not make it a fanciful happening that bears no relation to reality. Testimony or evidence is still needed to prove that a miracle happened and this ordinarily must be the medium of their reception.<sup>13</sup> Belief in God does not dispense with the need for evidence, but rather demands it since it provides the context in which evidence becomes meaningful.

It is, however, vitally important that we distinguish such general theistic belief, which should, according to the Biblical doctrine of man, be the common possession of humanity; from personal, saving, faith in Christ. The former must precede the examination and study of the evidence for the resurrection and the miraculous events associated with the life of Christ. The latter is made possible and may follow upon the investigation, study and acceptance of these things, but cannot precede it. It is perhaps the neglect of this distinction that has led to the empirical significance of statements relating to the resurrection being hidden, and the conclusion being drawn that such questions are to be decided by faith and not evidence.

### **Evidence for resurrection**

What is the evidence that may be regarded as sufficient for the acceptance of such a statement as, Jesus rose from the dead? Pannenburg, in his essay, ‘Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?’ believes that we have sufficient evidence in the case of St. Paul for regarding the resurrection of Jesus as an historical event, an event that really happened at that time.’ He bases this view upon the argument that in 1 Corinthians 15: 1–11, we have material that derives from St. Paul’s visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, only six years after the crucifixion, ‘and he certainly spoke with the other witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus about the appearances to them in comparison with the one which had happened to him.’<sup>14</sup> He also believes that the phrases put together by Paul ‘(that) Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures *and* that he was buried, *and* that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures, *and* that he

was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve' etc., are all pre-Pauline formulations. This must have developed in the first years after Jesus' death. 'Thus we have here quite a number of formulations that were given a fixed form and were verbally transmitted shortly after the events.'<sup>15</sup>

### **Eye witnesses**

A.M. Ramsey in his book *The Resurrection of Christ* believes that we have in the Gospel accounts of the resurrection a core of reliable material that can be traced back to the eyewitnesses themselves. 'The story of the Resurrection was together with the Passion a central part of the teaching of the Apostles from the beginning. It was part of the core of the Gospel. If, therefore, there are embellishments, we remember also that the stories would be handed down with a very special regard for the testimony of the eyewitnesses and the authority of the Apostles.'<sup>16</sup>

What is common to both these arguments for the historicity of the resurrection is the belief that we are dealing ultimately with the accounts of eyewitnesses. This is important, for as Becker says, almost all historical evidence is the testimony of witnesses. Richardson in his discussion of the resurrection seems to set aside too readily the view that historical knowledge of the resurrection is founded upon this kind of evidence, since 'the resurrection narratives are now recognised as being the outcome of a long period of growth in tradition.' In this he is expressing a particular point of view. He does so because he believes he has a stronger case for the resurrection as historical fact in the founding of the Christian Church and the emergence of the faith that carried the news about Jesus to every city in the Roman world. It is clear that while the latter is a strong circumstantial argument, the view that we are dealing with the accounts of those who saw the Risen Christ must not be set aside.

The Form Critical school has overstated its case for the formation of the resurrection stories by the church rather than their originating with individuals. Vincent Taylor wrote,

It is on this question of eyewitnesses that Form Criticism presents a very vulnerable front. If the Form Critics are right, the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the resurrection. As Bultmann sees it, the primitive community exists in vacuo, cut off from its founders by the walls of an inexplicable ignorance. Like Robinson Crusoe it must do the best it can. Unable to turn to anyone for information, it must invent situations for the words of Jesus, and put into his lips sayings which personal memory cannot check. All this is absurd, but there is reason for this unwillingness to take into account the existence of leaders and eyewitnesses . . . By the very nature of his study the Form Critic is not predisposed in favour of eyewitnesses, he deals with oral forms shaped by nameless individuals, and the



recognition of persons who would enrich the tradition by their actual recollections comes as a disturbing quantity just where he wants to operate with precise 'laws of tradition' . . . However disturbing to the smooth working of theories, the influence of eyewitnesses in the formation of the tradition cannot possibly be ignored. The one hundred and twenty at Pentecost did not go into permanent retreat . . . The presence of personal testimony is an element in the formative process, which it is folly to ignore. By its neglect of this factor Form Criticism gains in internal coherence, but it loses its power to accomplish its main task, which is to describe the *Sitz im Leben* of the tradition.<sup>17</sup>

The consistency, says W.J. Harrington, with which the Form Critics dispose of eyewitnesses is forced upon them by a philosophical presupposition that underlies their whole approach:

Rationalistic Biblical criticism, influenced by the system of Hegel, had substituted for a personal and transcendent God an impersonal and immanent Idea expressing itself in human development. The earlier religions, including Christianity, with their marvels and their myths, were stages in this evolution; this is why the origin and transmission of the religious legends of the Gospel must be rationally explained. The creative idea immanent in humanity finds expression in collective activity. Hence we have the primacy accorded to the community, to the detriment of individual witnesses. In this philosophy 'historical' and 'supernatural' are incompatible terms; the Form Critics have accepted this principle also. But for them there is no question of distinguishing the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith. Since the transformation of Jesus (under the influence of Paul's *Christus Mythus* contribution) began as far back as our traditions go, Jesus is forever lost to sight behind the primitive community.<sup>18</sup>

The Form Critics have greatly over-emphasised the rôle of the community, and in doing this they have been strongly influenced by the philosophical presuppositions and the interests of a theory. In eliminating the rôle of the eyewitnesses they have failed to do justice to a vital factor. As Harrington put it elsewhere 'In truth a community as such does not create, it is always an individual who produces something new.'<sup>19</sup> The activity of the community was informed and controlled by individual eyewitnesses. The emphasis of the New Testament generally upon the necessity for 'holding fast the form of sound words'<sup>20</sup>, and preserving a pure tradition, which could ultimately be traced to eyewitnesses reveals how strict that control was. This calls for recognition of the reciprocity and inter-relation of the community and the witnesses. Thus it is possible to say, when one has taken into account the arguments of Form Criticism and contemporary study of the Gospels and other documents of the New Testament, that we are dealing, in the narratives of the miracles and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, with the accounts of eyewitnesses of

these things. This is the character of the evidence for such things having really happened at that time.

### **Historical proof**

But is the evidence of such a character as would satisfy the mind of one who, though not already possessed of Christian faith, believed in God and did not *a priori* dismiss the possibility of the miraculous? It is clear that Paul intends to elicit a historical proof, when he refers to eyewitnesses (1 Cor 15: 1–6). It is clear that the church regarded the testimony of such eyewitnesses as of the greatest importance. Luke in the prologue to his Gospel declares, 'Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first to write . . .' (Luke 1: 1–3). The second epistle of Peter declares 'For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.' (2 Peter 1: 16). And John states 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . declare we unto you.' (1 John 1: 1). Ordinarily the testimony of several people to an event would satisfy the minds of most people that such and such a thing had actually happened, providing that the event in question was of a normal occurrence, and there was no reason for regarding the witnesses as having any purpose of misleading or deceiving. Where, however, the event was of an unusual nature, we should require stronger evidence to convince us of it. But it seems to be precisely at this point that the strength and credibility of the New Testament witnesses is increased. What we are dealing with are the accounts of those who were prepared to suffer and die for the truth of that to which they bore witness, and who had in the doctrine they had embraced accepted a higher standard of truth and honesty than any which was commonly accepted at the time or indeed since. All this serves greatly to heighten the character of the witness and their credibility. As Pannenberg puts it, 'The enthusiasm of an ultimate devotion in the face of all obstacles, which leads to sacrificing one's own life could not arise out of deceit.'<sup>21</sup> Such a judgment is one in which most ordinary people would concur. Such rare standards of probity and self-sacrifice in the witnesses would suggest that testimony of this kind might be trusted and regarded as sufficient to establish the factual character of the miracle of the resurrection.

This evidence, however, though primary does not stand alone. It is supported by a number of other things which would appear to corroborate the testimony of the disciples.

(a) It is important to notice that the resurrection was not expected. It would appear that the disciples were quite unprepared for this event, and, therefore, it is possible at the same time to dismiss the 'subjective' theory that the belief in the resurrection sprang from their own expectation. The death of Jesus served to shatter any expectations they might have had of him. Without the fact of the resurrection, the historian has to explain the sudden transformation of the disciples from defeat to boldness and confidence. If he advances the hypothesis that it was the continuing influence of the personality of Jesus upon them he will be met by the evidence that at the centre of their preaching was not the personality of Jesus, but the cross and resurrection.

(b) Then there is the tradition of the empty tomb. The agreement of Evidentialist writers like William Paley that it would have been impossible for the disciples to preach the resurrection in Jerusalem only a short time after the death of Christ if his body was still interred in a local tomb is echoed by more recent writers. A.M. Ramsey states, 'It is hard to see how the Apostles or their converts could have been convinced of a redemptive victory over death by Jesus had they believed that his body was corrupted in the grave.'<sup>22</sup> Had the tomb not been empty it would not only have made any convincing testimony to a victory over death impossible, but it would have provided the Jewish authorities with the conclusive refutation of the apostles' message. Pannenberg writes,

We have only to try to imagine how Jesus' disciples could proclaim his resurrection if they could constantly be refuted by the evidence of the tomb in which Jesus' corpse lay. Without having a reliable testimony for the emptiness of Jesus' tomb, the early Christian community could not have survived in Jerusalem proclaiming the resurrection of Christ . . . the Jewish anti-Christian polemics would have had a great interest in the preservation of the report of the tomb which would still have contained Jesus' corpse. But nothing of this is to be found in the tradition. On the contrary the Jews agreed with their adversaries that the tomb was empty.<sup>23</sup>

(c) Finally, there is the argument regarding the foundation of the Christian Church. Some historical explanation has to be found for this phenomenon, for the rise and power of a community of faith that explicitly based itself upon this miraculous event. The alternative hypotheses on the whole are less satisfactory and less convincing than the account that Christianity itself offers of its origins. It is difficult to see what else could fill the gap that would be left in history by the obliteration of the resurrection as an historical fact. This may be aptly summed up in the word of Bishop Butler who wrote, 'The miracles are a satisfactory account of these events, of which no other satisfactory accounts can be given, nor any account at all, but what is imaginary and invented.'<sup>24</sup>

### Sufficient evidence

All these points taken together constitute a considerable weight of evidence to a mind which as we have said is not disposed (a) to unbelief generally in God as creator and sustainer, and (b) to dismiss the possibility of miracle out of hand.

It might, however, be desired that the evidence should be stronger than it is, and that can be granted. But the question is not whether the evidence is conclusive or absolutely decisive, but whether it is sufficient. It is always possible to demand more evidence, and it is always possible for scepticism to create conditions in which that further evidence, when it is supplied, should not be regarded as counting. J.B. Mozley argued correctly, when he said, 'In the matter of evidence . . . the question is not what satisfies (i.e. satisfies every condition that may be raised), but what is sufficient . . . all that we are practically concerned to ask is: Is it a reasonable (degree of evidence)? Is it a proof of a natural force and weight, such as is accommodated to the constitution of our minds?'<sup>25</sup> Sufficient evidence is that which meets the natural requirements of the case, which satisfies the reasonable demands that arise within a particular context. Orthodox theology affirms that the evidence for the resurrection is sufficient, if taken within the context of theism. There is nothing extraordinary about the admission of those limitations, since all evidence is subject to some such limitations, and it is never necessary for it to be more than sufficient. A boundary has to be drawn somewhere, and it is not drawn arbitrarily, but by the natural and reasonable demands of the question, and the context in which it is placed. The matter is summed up very well in the words of Paley, 'The question, therefore, is not whether Christianity possesses the highest degree of evidence, but whether the not having more evidence be a sufficient reason for neglecting that which we have.'<sup>26</sup>

**DAVID SAMUEL** is the Director of Church Society

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### NOTES

1 R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford 1946), p.133.

2 See T.A. Roberts, *History and Christian Apologetic* (SPCK, London 1960), p.23.

3 Alan Richardson, *History Sacred and Secular* (SCM Press 1964), p.191.

4 A.J. Ayer, *Language Truth and Logic* (1936), p.89.

5 P.H. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics* (London 1954), pp.67f

6 P.H. Strawson, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1950), p.136.

7 See F. Waismann, *On Verifiability, Essays on Logic and Language*, ed. Antony Flew, (Oxford 1951).

8 T.A. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.23.

- 9 I.T. Ramsey, *Religious Language* (SCM Press), p.131.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.126.
- 11 A.M. Ramsey, *The Resurrection of Christ* (Fontana 1966), p.57.
- 12 William Paley, *Evidences of Christianity* (Works 1838), p.200.
- 13 J.B. Mozley, *On Miracles* (Bampton Lectures 1865: New Edition 1895), p.96.
- 14 W. Pannenberg, 'Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?', p.169.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 A.M. Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p.59.
- 17 Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (2nd Edition 1945), pp.41–43.
- 18 W.J. Harrington, *The Record of the Fulfilment* (London, 1968), pp.89, 90.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p.88.
- 20 2 Timothy 1: 13.
- 21 W. Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, p.114.
- 22 A.M. Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p.56.
- 23 W. Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, p.113.
- 24 Bishop Butler, *The Analogy of Religion*, p.201.
- 25 J.B Mozley, *op. cit.*, p.94.
- 26 William Paley, *op. cit.*, p.363.